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Cruschina, Silvio

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Setting the boundaries: Presentational *ci*-sentences in Italian

Silvio Cruschina
University of Vienna

Constructions that are typically used to introduce a new referent into the discourse may extend this function so as to introduce a new event or situation. In this paper, I examine the case of presentational *ci*-sentences in Italian, which have developed exactly this new function out of existential sentences. Despite being superficially similar to existential sentences, as well as to clefts, presentational *ci*-sentences must be kept separate from both sentence types, and must be treated as an independent construction with distinct structural and functional properties. Unlike existentials, presentational *ci*-sentences assert the existence of an event or situation and involve a predication structure characterized by a CP (the relative clause) that functions as the predicate of the DP. Unlike clefts, which are typically used to mark narrow focus, presentational *ci*-sentences display a sentence-focus structure whereby the event is presented as all new. A contrastive analysis of presentational *ci*-sentences against existentials and clefts will thus allow us not only to understand the exact boundaries between these constructions, but also to identify more precisely the distinctive characteristic properties of each sentence type.

Keywords: presentational, cleft, existential, locative, focus, Italian

1. Introduction

Existential and cleft sentences have been a topic of linguistic research for practically as long as systematic crosslinguistic comparative work has been carried out. Both constructions vary from language to language in their structure, semantics, and pragmatics, but generally also share certain characteristics. In the last decades, special attention has been paid to crosslinguistic differences with respect to semantic constraints, such as the definiteness restriction on the pivot nominal of existentials, and to pragmatic functions, such as the discourse-functional properties of clefts. On the basis of the different nature and behaviour of these properties, these studies have identified several types and subtypes of existential and cleft sentences, some of which only share superficial properties with the prototypical construction (see Bolinger 1972; Milsark 1979; Berrutto 1986; Declerck 1988; Lambrecht 1988, 1994, 2001; Hedberg 1990, 2000; Abbott 1992, 1993; Collins 1992; Delahunty 1995, 2001; McNally 1997; Davidse 1999, 2014; De Cesare 2007, 2017; Bicler and Davidse 2008; Leonetti 2008; Dufter 2009; Roggia 2009; Cruschina 2012a; Lahousse and Borremans 2014; Karssenberg 2017, forthcoming; Davidse and Kimp 2016; Karssenberg and Lahousse forthcoming).

In this article, I will concentrate on *presentational ci-sentences* (henceforth, PCS) in Italian, namely, a construction that shows superficial similarities with existentials and

clefts, but that must actually be kept distinct from both. In order to understand the peculiarities of this construction, let us start by examining what can be considered prototypical existentials and prototypical clefts in Italian. Sentence (1) involves an existential sentence that includes the typical components of the existential construction: a pronominal form (‘proform’), a copula, a postverbal indefinite nominal pivot and a locative coda:¹

- (1) *C’ è un gatto nel giardino.* (existential)
 there be.3SG a cat in-the garden
 { PROFORM | COPULA | PIVOT | (locative) CODA }
 ‘There’s a cat in the garden.’

By contrast, in (2) we find an example of an Italian cleft sentence, which is clearly different from the existential in (1) in that it does not feature a proform and is characterized by the presence of a (pseudo-)relative clause:

- (2) *È il gatto che è nel giardino.* (cleft)
 be.3SG the cat that be.3SG in-the garden
 { COPULA | CLEFTED-DP | CP (PSEUDO-)RELATIVE CLAUSE }
 ‘It’s the cat that is in the garden.’

An example of a PCS is illustrated in (3). On the one hand, it includes the proform *ci* which is, at least etymologically, a locative clitic and which is also found in existentials. On the other hand, PCSs may feature the pseudo-relative CP typical of clefts:

- (3) *C’ è il gatto che ha fame.* (PCS)
 there be.3SG the cat that has hunger
 { PROFORM | COPULA | PIVOT | CP (PSEUDO-)RELATIVE CLAUSE }
 ‘The cat is hungry.’ [Lit. There’s the cat that is hungry.]
 (Berretta 1995: 212)

PCSs have received some attention in the linguistic literature, even though they have been labelled differently depending on the alleged primary aspect or function of the construction: *ci presentativo* or presentational *ci*-sentences (Berruto 1986; Berretta 1995; Cruschina 2012a, 2016; Marzo and Crocco 2015), *ci focalizzante* ‘focalizing *ci*’ (De Cesare 2007), or *c’è* clefts (Karssen et al. 2017). These studies have all described and examined PCSs in comparison with either existentials (Berruto 1986; De Cesare 2007; Cruschina 2012a) or clefts (Karssen et al. 2017).

In this paper, I argue that, despite the apparent parallels with clefts, Italian PCSs should not be treated as non-prototypical clefts, but rather as a kind of ‘extension’ of the existential construction. In particular, I will address the boundary problem, namely, the

¹ Following the traditional terminology in the relevant literature, I use ‘pivot’ for the nominal constituent that describes the entity whose existence or presence is asserted or denied in an existential sentence, and ‘coda’ for the constituent that usually – albeit not necessarily – follows the pivot, such as the locative phrase in (1) (see, e.g., McNally 2011). The syntactic encoding of the pivot varies crosslinguistically, insofar as it may display subject or object properties – or even a mix thereof – depending on the language (see Lambrecht 2001; McNally 2011; Cruschina 2015a; Bentley and Cruschina 2016).

question of defining the exact boundaries between PCSs and clefts on the one hand, and between PCSs and existential/locative *ci*-sentences on the other.

On the basis of the superficial morphosyntactic analogies and differences, one may argue that PCSs are in fact existential sentences featuring a definite DP and a relative CP headed by the pivot. The definiteness of the DP may indeed change the meaning of the sentence and thus correlate with a different underlying structure. A definite DP in an apparently existential sentence gives rise to a locative interpretation, which, as will be argued in Section 2, corresponds to a different structure. This is what happens if we replace *un gatto* ‘a cat’ in the existential construction in (4a) with *il gatto* ‘the cat’ in (4b) (see De Cesare 2007; Cruschina 2012a):

- (4) a. *C' è un gatto nel giardino.*
 there be.3SG a cat in-the garden
 ‘There’s a cat in the garden.’
 b. *C' è il gatto, nel giardino.*
 there be.3SG the cat in-the garden
 ‘The cat is in the garden.’ [Lit. There’s the cat in the garden.]

Does the same occur with an existential featuring a (pseudo-)relative CP? Is a PCS an instance of an existential sentence except for the differences accounted for by the pseudo-relative CP? Providing an answer to these questions may be more difficult if an indefinite DP is involved in the existential, as in (5a), but it is even more so in the case of a definite DP, as in (5b). Are we dealing with an existential and a locative sentence respectively? Or do both examples in (5) instantiate cases of PCS?

- (5) a. *C' è un gatto che ha fame.*
 there be.3SG a cat that has hunger
 ‘There’s a cat that is hungry.’
 b. *C' è il gatto(,) che ha fame.*
 there be.3SG the cat that has hunger
 ‘The cat is hungry.’ [Lit. There’s the cat that is hungry.]

The solution to this problem that I propose is the following: even if they conceptually and morphosyntactically derive from the existential construction, PCS sentences have now developed into an independent construction with distinct properties and functions. The definiteness of the DP and the nature of the CP are key elements to be examined if we want to understand the new properties and functions of PCS.

The data discussed in this paper come from different sources: previous literature, corpora, but also personally collected real-life examples. Unlike existentials and clefts, the use of which is not restricted to specific registers or varieties of Italian, PCSs seem to be limited to the spoken language and are thus scarcely attested in corpora (Marzo and Crocco 2015). This makes it difficult to carry out quantitative analyses (see Karsenberg et al. 2017 for a qualitative analysis of corpus examples). The boundary problem may contribute to this difficulty on the qualitative level too, since several apparent occurrences of PCS may lend themselves to different interpretations. In particular, deciding whether we are dealing with a cleft, an existential sentence or a PCS is not always an easy task.

1.1. PCS as non-prototypical clefts

The focus function of clefts has been acknowledged since the first linguistic analyses of the phenomenon (see, e.g., Jespersen 1937). More specifically, clefts typically serve an argument-focus function, in that they put an argument into focus: the clefted constituent in focus in the main clause is foregrounded, whereas the information expressed in the CP is generally presented as presupposed (see Lambrecht 1994, 2001, among others). Several studies, however, have later shown that in various languages specific types of clefts may be used to mark different focus structures, including presentational or sentence-focus structures (see Prince 1978; Doetjes et al. 2004; Dufter 2009; Roggia 2009; Hedberg 2013; Lahousse and Borremans 2014; De Cesare 2017; Karssenberg 2017, forthcoming; Karssenberg et al. 2017; Karssenberg and Lahousse forthcoming).

As mentioned, PCSs share a number of properties with clefts. First of all, they display the same biclausal structure typical of clefts, consisting of a main clause and a subordinate CP. Compare (2) and (3), repeated here below for convenience:

- (2') *È il gatto che è nel giardino.*
be.3SG the cat that be.3SG in-the garden
{COPULA | CLEFTED-DP | CP (PSEUDO-)RELATIVE CLAUSE}
'It's the cat that is in the garden.'
- (3') *C' è il gatto che ha fame.*
there be.3SG the cat that has hunger
{PROFORM | COPULA | PIVOT | CP (PSEUDO-)RELATIVE CLAUSE}
'The cat is hungry.' [Lit. There's the cat that is hungry.]
(Berretta 1995: 212)

Despite the biclausal format, clefts express a single proposition which can be rendered by using a semantically equivalent sentence with an unmarked, canonical word order. This property, labelled 'decleftability' in recent literature (Dufter 2009), has been considered an essential feature for the inclusion of a construction into the cleft family:

- (6) *Il gatto ha fame.*
the cat has hunger
'The cat is hungry.'

The sentences in (3') and (6), however, are not actually interchangeable, insofar as they are used in different contexts. Indeed, the equivalence between a cleft and its canonical counterpart is meant to hold at the semantic level alone. The two versions are not always pragmatically equivalent, in that the substitution of a cleft for its canonical counterpart in a specific context may prove pragmatically infelicitous (Karssenberg et al. 2017, 61–62; see also Lambrecht 2001). If we compare a PCS with a cleft, it thus becomes clear that the two constructions have different pragmatic functions: while the PCS in (3') can be used to start a discourse or a conversational move, introducing a new event or situation (cf. § 4), the cleft sentence (2') can be used for contrastive purposes, focusing on the clefted DP (e.g. *It's the cat that is hungry, not the dog*).²

² This is of course just one possibility: cleft sentences can indeed have functions and information-structure specifications other than contrastive. Sentence (2) for example could be used in a specificational function

On the basis of these properties, Karssenberget al. (2017) treat PCS sentences as a special type of cleft or, in other terms, as a type of non-prototypical cleft. The examples that they analyse can therefore be considered “as instances of the cross-linguistic cleft family introduced by different expressions (e.g. English *it is*, *there is*, French *c’est* ‘it is’, *il y a* ‘there is’ and a null pronoun in Italian *è* ‘it is’ clefts)” (Karssenberget al. 2017, 59). Similar constructions, or at least constructions with a similar function, are called sentence-focus clefts in Lambrecht (2001). In what follows, I will argue for a stronger version of the separation between PCS and clefts, showing that the commonalities between the two constructions are in fact weaker than they might initially appear.

1.2. Aims and structure of the paper

The aims of this paper are to define the morphosyntactic properties and the pragmatic function of PCSs. This will ultimately contribute to the setting of the boundaries between *ci*-sentence types in Italian.³ I show that, under close scrutiny, the similarity with clefts is rather weak. The presence of a CP, which is the most obvious property that PCSs and clefts share, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the formation of a PCS, whereas the hypothesis that PCSs are a type of non-prototypical clefts assumes that it would be. It is not a necessary condition because PCSs can also involve an adjectival or a prepositional phrase (see Cruschina 2012a; Casalicchio 2013; see also Leonetti 2008 and Villalba 2013 for similar examples in Catalan):

- (7) *C’è Maria malata / all’ ospedale*
 there be.3SG ill at-the hospital
 ‘Mary is ill / in the hospital.’ [Lit. There’s Mary ill / in the hospital].

The presence of a CP is not a sufficient condition either because all types of *ci*-sentences – not only presentational but also existentials and inverse locatives (cf. § 2)– can occur with a CP, displaying a morphosyntactically identical structure that may potentially lead to ambiguity. The CP must not be present, but even when it is, each type of *ci*-sentence has a distinct function:

- a) Existentials (+ CP) assert the existence of an entity (as being located in time and in space) whose properties are then specified in a restrictive or appositive relative clause;
- b) (Inverse) Locatives (+ CP) put the subject of predication (i.e. the DP) in focus, which can be followed by a restrictive or appositive relative clause;
- c) Presentationals (+ CP) assert the existence of an event or situation structurally instantiated by a DP + CP construction (i.e. the subject and the predicate of a Small Clause, respectively).

to answer the question ‘What’s this noise?’. I will return to the functions of the PCS construction, also in comparison with clefts, in Section 4.

³ The label *ci*-sentences is here used as a cover term for different sentence types (existential, locative, presentational) that feature the clitic proform *ci*, as will be explained and discussed in more detail in the next section.

The most relevant comparison and contrastive analysis to understand the real nature of PCS is thus not with clefts, but with the other types of *ci*-sentences. In what follows, I will first introduce the different types of *ci*-sentences in Italian, focusing in particular on the distinctive role of the proform *ci* and on the definiteness of the DP in each type (§ 2). In Section 3, I will look more closely at the existential and (inverse) locative sentences with a CP which may be problematic because of their superficial identity with PCSs, and I will attempt to trace the boundaries between the two main types of *ci*-sentences. In Section 4, I will then concentrate on the pragmatic functions of PCSs, offering some tests and observations that could help to outline the distinct functional and discourse properties of the PCS construction. In this section, I will also contrast and compare PCSs and clefts in reference to their acknowledged focusing function, highlighting differences and similarities. In Section 5, I will finally summarize the main points of the paper and conclude with some closing remarks.

2. Types of *ci*-sentences in Italian

The term *ci*-sentence is here used to refer to types of existential or pseudo-existential sentences which all feature the proform *ci* attached to the copula *essere* ‘be’ in Italian (see Cruschina 2012a, 2016). Since Berruto (1986, 66–67), several types of *ci*-sentence have been identified. His classification can be summarized as in (8). The English translations of the original Italian labels and of the respective paraphrases are mine, and each type is illustrated by a corresponding example in (9)–(13):

- (8) I. existential *c'è* = ‘exist’ (9)
 II. locative-deictic *c'è* = ‘be somewhere/be there/be here’ (10)
 III. presentational *c'è* = ‘I’m telling you/look/listen’ (11)
 IV. eventive *c'è* = ‘happen/occur/take place’ (12)
 V. presence, givenness, circumstantial *c'è* = ‘be given/we have/be present’ (13)
- (9) *C'è la provvidenza.*
 there is the providence
 ‘There is Providence.’
- (10) *Al Polo Nord ci sono gli orsi bianchi.*
 at-the Pole North there are the bears white
 ‘There are white bears in the North Pole.’
- (11) *C'è un signore che vuole parlare con te*
 there is a gentleman that wants talk.INF with you
 ‘A gentleman (here) wants to talk to you.’
- (12) *Ci fu una disgrazia*
 there was an accident
 ‘There was an accident.’
- (13) *Ci sono due nuovi professori di romanistica.*
 there are two new professors of Romance-studies

‘There are two new professors of Romance Studies.’

Berruto’s classification is based on semantic and functional criteria, distinguishing between *ci*-sentences according to their immediate meaning. The semantic contribution and morphosyntactic status of each element of the construction, however, are not taken into consideration. A more compositional analysis, which looks at the import and grammatical status of the components, as well as exploring the prosodic level, has been proposed by De Cesare (2007). On the basis of their grammatical properties, De Cesare groups together the existential, locative-deictic, eventive, and presence *c’è* and contrasts them with focalizing *c’è* (corresponding to Berruto’s presentational *c’è*). The respective characteristics of these two main types are listed in Table 1 (from De Cesare 2007, 138, my translation):

Table 1: De Cesare’s (2007) classification of *ci*-sentences in Italian

	Existential, locative-deictic, eventive, presence <i>c’è</i>	Focalizing <i>c’è</i>
Lexis	‘full’ <i>c’è</i> : semantic value	‘empty’ <i>c’è</i> : pragmatic value
Syntax	Optional relative clause. When realized, it can be either a restrictive or an appositive relative.	Obligatory relative clause. Pseudo-relative status.
Prosody	When present: - the restrictive relative is uttered within the same prosodic unit as its antecedent. - the appositive relative is uttered in a different prosodic unit from that of its antecedent.	The construction <i>c’è... che...</i> is realized in one single intonational unit.

De Cesare distinguishes two major types of *c’è*, depending on whether it has a semantic or a pragmatic value. In the first group (i.e. existential, locative-deictic, eventive, and presence), *c’è* has a full semantic value, in that it contributes to the overall meaning of the construction. Focalizing *c’è*, by contrast, is semantically empty and only serves a pragmatic function, as shown by the fact that it can be neither negated nor interrogated. On a syntactic level, she compares the different status of the CP: semantic *c’è* can optionally be followed by a CP that has the function of a proper relative clause and that, as such, can be either restrictive or appositive. Pragmatic *c’è*, on the contrary, requires a CP that must be analysed as a pseudo-relative clause. Prosodically, the optional relative clause of the semantic *c’è* is uttered within the same prosodic unit as the first part of the construction if it is a restrictive relative clause, or separately from it in the case of appositive relative clauses. In other words, the CP exhibits the typical syntactic and prosodic properties of relative clauses depending on the restrictive–appositive distinction. On the other hand, the presentational construction *c’è... che...* featuring a focalizing *c’è* does not seem to display major intonational boundaries and is realized in one single prosodic unit.

A refined and extended version of this classification is proposed in Cruschina (2012a), where four types of *ci*-sentences are identified according to their focus structure (in the sense of Lambrecht 1994), the precise role and semantic contribution of the proform *ci*, and the function and typical definiteness status of the corresponding DP (see also Cruschina 2015b, 2016), as summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Cruschina’s (2012a) classification of *ci*-sentences in Italian

TYPE	CONSTRUCTION	FOCUS STRUCTURE	<i>CI</i>	DP
I	existential	sentence or predicate	pro-argument	predicate (indefinite)
II	inverse locative	argument	pro-predicate	argument (definite)
III	deictic locative	argument	pro-predicate	argument (definite)
IV	presentational	sentence	lexicalized	argument (specific)

In what follows, I will concentrate on the last two columns of Table 2 and, in particular, on the role of the proform in each type of *ci*-sentence. While existential *ci* (type I) is a pro-argument signalling the (locative) implicit argument of the existential predication (and providing the spatio-temporal coordinates of the utterance), locative *ci* (type II and III) is a pro-predicate referring to a discourse-active locative predicate. Presentational *ci* (type IV) is a lexicalized, semantically empty element, as observed by De Cesare (2007). Let us start with the first type of *ci*-sentence, namely existential sentences where *ci* functions as pro-argument. This type of *ci*-sentence may express different semantic and pragmatic nuances according to pragmatic or lexical factors (e.g. Berruto’s distinctions), but they all share some core properties; hence, De Cesare grouped them together in her classification.

2.1. *Ci* as pro-argument

The term *existential* is crosslinguistically applied to a range of constructions that vary considerably in their shape but that seem to share the general meaning of existence or presence: “The term ‘existential sentence’ is used to refer to a specialized or non-canonical construction which expresses a proposition about the existence or the presence of someone or something” (McNally 2011, 1830).

The most common pragmatic function of existential sentences is however not to assert the existence of an entity but “to introduce the NP referent into the discourse world of the interlocutors by asserting its PRESENCE in a given location” (Lambrecht 1994, 179). Here, “location” is to be understood as reference to both space and time. In Borschev and Partee (2001, 22), the relationship between existence and location is more explicitly established, in that it is assumed that existence should always be understood with respect to a location: in the absence of explicit linguistic specifications in the sentence, an implicit location must be given by the context, and this is usually intended as “here” or “there”, “now” or “then”.

Following and developing this idea within a formal semantic approach, Francez (2007) proposes that in the existential predication, the pivot is the predicate of a contextual domain variable, which we may intuitively think of as a location and which could be considered to be syntactically encoded by an implicit or phonologically null argument (see also Francez 2010; Bentley, Ciconte and Cruschina 2015). This implicit argument is highly context-dependent, as shown in (14) (adapted from Francez 2007, 2010):

- (14) a. *Non c' è caffè.*
 not there is coffee
 'There's no coffee.'
 b. *Non c' è caffè al negozio.*
 not there is coffee at-the store
 'There's no coffee at the store.'

The negative existential in (14a) is normally understood with respect to a location: if no specifications are provided in the context, this sentence would be most naturally interpreted as referring to here and now. A PP modifier such as *al negozio* 'at the store' in (14b) restricts the contextual domain variable, contributing to the narrowing down or specification of the variable itself.

The *default* deictic interpretation of (14a) seems to be possible with negative existentials, which tend to presuppose a location (see Partee and Borschev 2002, 2007), but is not as readily available in an affirmative existential like the one in (15):

- (15) *#Ci sono bambini.*
 there are children
 # 'There are children'

The existential sentence in (15) is pragmatically odd if uttered in an out-of-the-blue context because no spatio-temporal coordinates are provided. In the absence of contextual (temporal/locative) restrictions (e.g. adverbial or PP modifiers), we may obtain a pure existential meaning:

- (16) a. *C' è la provvidenza.*
 there is the providence
 'There's Providence.' > 'Providence exists.'
 b. *Ci sono tanti tipi di mele.*
 there are many types of apples
 'There are many types of apple.'
 c. *Non ci sono (i) fantasmi.*
 not there are the ghosts
 'There are no ghosts'

Being a negative existential, sentence (16c) is in fact ambiguous between an existence interpretation (i.e. 'There's no such as thing as ghosts', hence 'Ghosts do not exist') and a deictically-anchored reading (i.e. 'There are no ghosts here') (see Bentley, Ciconte and Cruschina 2015, 150).

When the most relevant contextual restriction is temporal (i.e. in the presence of a topic time), and with the appropriate type of DP, we obtain an eventive existential:

- (17) a. *Ci fu una disgrazia.*
 there was an accident
 ‘There was an accident (then).’
 b. *Ci fu un terremoto.*
 there was an earthquake
 ‘There was an earthquake (then).’

Moreover, the contextual variable can help to identify the topic situation (in the sense of Klein 2008), which is particularly evident in the case of abstract nouns with no physical realization, as in (18):⁴

- (18) *Non c’ è motivo di offendersi.*
 not there is reason of offend-REFL
 ‘There’s no reason to take offence.’

To sum up, we can say that in type-I *ci*-sentences, which I have labelled existential, *ci* signals the presence of an abstract location, which is context-dependent and functions as the argument of the predication. The special semantic nuances or functions identified by Berruto (1986) (e.g. existential, deictic-locative, eventive, and circumstantial; cf. (8) above) are determined by independent pragmatic and contextual factors,⁵ the presence of negation, and the lexical properties of the pivot DP. As implied in De Cesare’s (2007) classification, all these special interpretations and functions correspond to one single construction that displays the same grammatical properties.

2.2. *Ci* as pro-predicate

Let us now turn to the types of *ci*-sentence in which the proform plays the role of a pro-predicate (i.e. type II and type III). In this type of *ci*-sentence, the pivot is typically definite.⁶ Since the existence of definite DPs is presupposed, locative and deictic *ci*-sentences do not instantiate an existential predication, but rather an ‘inverted’ locative predication. In other words, they are locative predications in disguise, featuring a subject DP and a locative predicate. An example of inverse locative is given in (19):

⁴ Klein (2008) proposes that all utterances are evaluated with respect to a specific situation, which he labels topic situation. The topic situation can be identified externally (i.e. pragmatically) or linguistically (i.e. by means of overt linguistic material). As noted by Klein (2008, 290), his notion of topic situation is distinct from the traditional notion of topic, generally defined in terms of givenness or aboutness. In this view, the spatio-temporal coordinates provided by the context will suffice to identify the situation topic of the utterance.

⁵ These pragmatic and contextual factors may be better understood with reference to the kind of topic that restricts the contextual domain variable, e.g. a topic time, a topic space, a topic situation, or a topic world which may coincide with the real world or with the fictional world created, for instance, by a novel. For more details on these notions, see Klein (2008).

⁶ The definiteness of the DP is apparently at odds with the definiteness restriction that generally operates on genuine existentials across languages. Assuming that *ci*-sentences with a definite DP are not proper existentials, but rather locative or PCS provides an explanation for the apparent violation of the definiteness restriction (see Cruschina 2012a, 2016, and references therein).

- (19) *C' è Maria, in cucina.*
 there is Mary in kitchen
 'Mary is in the kitchen.' [Lit. There's Mary in the kitchen.]

Inverse locatives like that in (19) involve a focalization strategy that turns a canonical topic-comment locative predication (20a) into an argument-focus structure (20b):

- (20) a. Locative Predication: [Maria]_{TOPIC} [è in cucina] _{PREDICATE}
 ↓ **focalization** ↓
 b. Inverse Locative: C'è [Maria]_{FOCUS} [in cucina]_{TOPIC}

A sentence like (19) would be appropriate in a context that elicits narrow focus on the subject (e.g. as an answer to the question ‘Who is in the kitchen?’).⁷ Crucially, in this construction, the proform *ci* has a referential meaning, in that it refers to the dislocated predicative topic. Deictic locatives (type III) are very similar to inverse locatives in nature, but are characterized by the absence of an overt or contextually salient locative predicate, which causes the sentence to take on the deictic meaning of ‘here’ and ‘now’:

- (21) a. *Guarda! C'è Maria!*
look there is Mary
'Look! Mary is here.' [Lit. Look! There's Mary.]
b. *Ci sono i cavalli!*
there are the horses
'The horses are here!' [Lit. There are the horses.]

In type-II and type-III *ci*-sentences, therefore, *ci* refers to a linguistic antecedent that functions as the predicate of the locative predication, and that is either available within the same sentence or salient in the discourse context (type II). In the absence of a given or active location, the default interpretation is deictic (type III), whereby the implicit ‘here’ still serves a predicate function.

2.3. Presentational *ci*

It is now time to discuss the role of *ci* in PCS sentences. As already discussed at the beginning of Section 2, in this type of *ci*-sentence, the proform *ci* is semantically empty. Thus, it cannot be attributed a role in the predication: it does not stand for the argument (as in existentials) or for the predicate (as in inverse locatives). How then do we explain its presence? What is the connection with the other types of *ci* in terms of grammatical change? To answer these questions, I propose that PCSs represent an extension of the existential type, moving from the assertion of the existence (or presence) of an entity to the assertion of the existence of an event or a situation (hence the label *eventive*

⁷ It is important to note that the locative nature of inverse locatives is different from the possible locative value or anchoring that proper existential sentences may display and that was discussed in the previous section, in that it involves significant differences at the level of the logical predication and information structure (see Cruschina 2012a, 2015b for more details).

existentials adopted in Leonetti 2008 and Villalba 2013 for the same or a similar type of sentence).⁸ In this sense, they correspond to what Lambrecht (1994) calls sentence-focus structures in which the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate of the clause and which have a presentation or event-reporting function.

What are the consequences of this semantic extension? First of all, PCS are characterized by a canonical predication structure, where the subject corresponds to the DP and the predicate to the rest of the sentence, i.e. to the pseudo-relative CP. Let us examine and compare the predication structure of PCS with that of other *ci*-sentences, which may also be read in terms of diachronic development (see Bentley and Cruschina 2016). In Figure 1, a Small-Clause analysis is adopted to illustrate the semantic subject-predicate characteristics of the sentence types (see Hazout 2004; Cruschina 2012a, 2014, 2015b):

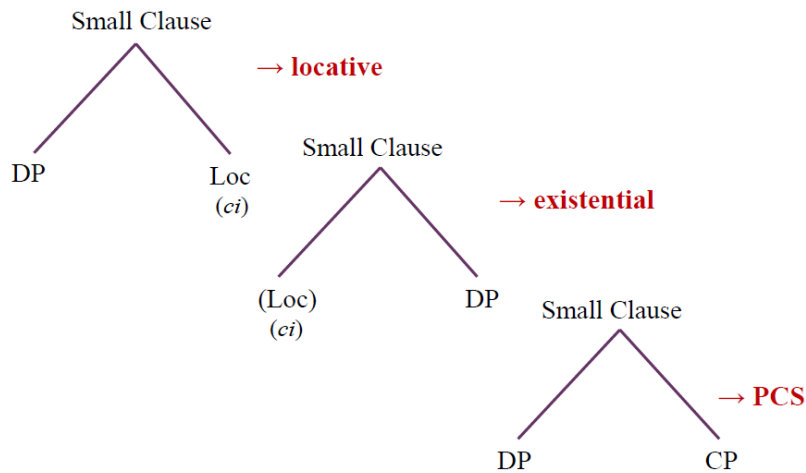


Figure 1: The predication structure of *ci*-sentences

A canonical locative predication characterizes locative sentences, including inverse and deictic locatives, where *ci* refers to the predicate location. In existentials, instead, we find the inverse configuration: the pivot DP is predicated of an implicit location and the proform *ci* is linked to this abstract argument. In PCS, finally, we find a different structure: the predicate is represented by the pseudo-relative CP and the pronoun *ci* plays no role. This analysis is confirmed by the fact that PCSs always have a semantically equivalent counterpart with SV order (22), while the same does not seem to hold true of existentials (23):

- (22) a. *C' è il gatto che ha fame.*
 there is the cat that has hunger
 b. *Il gatto ha fame.*
 the cat has hunger
 'The cat is hungry.'

⁸ PCSs or very similar constructions seem to be common crosslinguistically, being present not just in Italian, but also in French (Lambrecht 1988, 1994, 2002), in Catalan (Villalba 2013) and, beyond the Romance language family, in Swahili (Marten 2013, 68–69). As for English, see Collins (1992) and Lambrecht 2001, 304) on presentational-eventive *there*-clefts, and Davidse (2014), and Davidse and Kimps (2016) on specificational *there*-clefts.

- (23) a. *C' è un gatto nel giardino.*
 there is a cat in-the garden
 ‘There’s a cat in the garden.’
 b. *?Un gatto è nel giardino.*
 a cat is in-the garden
 ? ‘A cat is in the garden.’

As is typical of canonical predications, moreover, the DP of PCSs tends to be definite or at least specific: indefinite DPs make bad subjects. Compare the full grammaticality of (24a) with a definite DP with the grammatically marginal status of (24b) with an indefinite DP:

- (24) a. *C' è il gatto che è nel giardino (, vallo a prendere).*
 there is the cat the is in-the garden go.IMP.2SG-it to fetch.INF
 ‘The cat is in the garden [lit. there’s the cat in the garden] (, go fetch it).
 b. *?? C' è un gatto che è nel giardino.*
 there is a cat that is in-the garden

The same analysis can be extended to those PCSs with an adjectival or prepositional phrase, as in (25) (cf. § 1.2). In this case, the predicate is represented by an adjectival or prepositional phrase and the pronoun *ci* again plays no role here:

- (25) *C'è Maria malata / all' ospedale*
 there be.3SG ill at-the hospital
 ‘Mary is ill / in the hospital.’ [Lit. There’s Mary ill / in the hospital].

The semantic equivalence between the predication of a PCS and of that of a canonical subject-predicate sentence, along with the indefiniteness restrictions on the DP, corroborate the analysis in Figure 1 and imply that the presentational construction itself (i.e. *c'è... che...*) has a purely pragmatic function, to which we will return in Section 4.

3. A comparison with existential and locative *ci*-sentences

In the light of the analysis outlined in the previous section regarding the development of the PCS construction out of existentials (cf. Figure 1), it seems natural to view the main morphosyntactic attributes of this type of *ci*-sentence as properties that have been maintained from the existential construction. Accordingly, the partial overlap and the apparent analogies should be regarded as the natural reflexes of a persistent continuity with respect to the source construction.

This development also helps us to understand the new pragmatic function associated with PCS: the assertion of the existence of an event or a situation which is newly introduced into the discourse. This specific function may well be related to that found in clefts (see Karssenberget al. 2017; Lambrecht 2001; also see section 4.1 below); nonetheless existentials must be seen as the basis and the source of the PCS construction. This becomes clearer if we take into account the patterns of variation among the existential constructions found in Italo-Romance and Sardinian dialects.

3.1. The existential basis

In the Italo-Romance varieties spoken in Italy, cleft sentences, whenever available, share the same basic syntactic structure attested crosslinguistically: “a biclausal sentence structure, consisting of a copular clause and a relative(-like) clause” (De Cesare 2017, 536). The copular clause systematically contains the copula *be*. The existential construction, however, exhibits a high degree of variation (see Cruschina 2014, 2015a; Bentley, Ciconte and Cruschina 2015; ; Bentley and Cruschina 2016). This variation relates not only to the presence or absence of a proform, but also to the choice of the verbal copula used to express existential propositions, which can be an outcome of Latin ESSE ‘be’ or HABERE ‘have’, but also of STARE ‘stand’ in some dialects. The choice of the copula, in turn, determines other specific morphosyntactic properties of the sentence, in particular verbal agreement: ESSE and STARE tend to agree with the pivot, while HABERE typically shows an invariable third person singular morphology.

What is crucial to this discussion is that PCSs always display the same structural components as the existential construction in the same dialects, such as a proform and copula ESSE in Sardinian (26a), copula STARE in some Apulian dialects (26b), and HAVE in southern Calabrian (27) (the same holds true of Catalan, see Leonetti 2008 and Villalba 2013):

- (26) a. *B’este su direttore ch’ est arrennegato oje. Menzus a non brullare.*
 PF is the director who is angry today better to not joke.INF
 (Lula, Sardinian)
- b. *Stè u direttóurə ch’ è arrabbietə oscə. Megghia non scherzè.*
 stands the director who is angry today better not joke.INF
 ‘The director is angry today. We’d better not play around.’
 (Polignano a Mare, Apulia)
- (27) A: *Ti va mi nesci cu nui stasira?* (Bova Marina, Calabria)
 you.DAT goes that go-out.2SG with us tonight
 ‘Would you like to go out with us tonight?’
- B: *No, non pozzu. Avi me soru chi canta nt’a chiazza e*
 no not can.1SG has my sister who sings in-the square and
no pozzu mu m’ a perdu.
 not can.1SG that me her miss.1SG
 ‘No, I can’t. My sister is singing in the square and I can’t miss her.’

In Logudorese Sardinian ESSE is found in alternation with HABERE in accordance with the definiteness of the pivot (Bentley 2004, 2011). Since PCSs typically feature a definite pivot, in these dialects ESSE is the copula used in this construction (26a). The definiteness of the pivot can therefore help us to identify a presentational *ci*-sentence and distinguish it from the existentials that include a relative clause.

3.2. Existentials and locatives with a CP

The next question that we need to address is the status of the CP. In Section 1.2, I argued that the presence of a CP is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition to define a PCS, which entails that not all *ci*-sentences with a CP are instances of the PCS construction. In her analysis, De Cesare (2007) states that existentials and PCSs can both feature a CP (cf. § 2), but the CP will have a different status according to the sentence type: it is a genuine relative clause in the case of existentials, while it corresponds to a pseudo-relative in the case of PCS.⁹ The following can be considered to be examples of existential sentences followed by a relative clause:¹⁰

- (28) *Dice che c'è una nave che è affondata.*
 says that there is a ship that is sunk
 'S/he says that there's a ship that sank.'
 (Sornicola 2010, 124)
- (29) *Se c'è un uomo che conosce la verità sui tanti e misteriosi rivoli di sangue che hanno flagellato la recente storia italiana, quell'uomo si chiama Salvatore Riina.*
 'If there's a man who knows the truth on the many and mysterious trickles of blood that have scourged recent Italian history, that man's name is Salvatore Riina.'
- (30) *Nell'auto dietro a Vignola, c'era un collega, munito di telefono cellulare che ha dato l'allarme: «C'è un uomo che spara per strada.»*
 'In the car behind Vignola, there was a colleague with a mobile phone who raised the alarm: "There's a man shooting in the street."

These examples contain indefinite DPs, which introduce new referents into the discourse and which would thus more readily lend themselves to an existential reading. In (29), in addition, the CP includes a stative predicate and thus cannot be a pseudo-relative (see Casalicchio 2013). In general, we can assume that *ci*-sentences with a CP that feature an indefinite DP are in fact existential sentences with a relative clause. Their function is the typical function of the existential construction, to which a relative clause is added:

- (31) Existentials with a CP assert the existence or presence of an entity (as being located in time and in space), whose properties are then specified in a restrictive or appositive relative clause.

Existential sentences, however, do not exclusively involve indefinite DPs. Contextualized existentials, expressing 'availability' for a specific purpose (see Abbott 1992, 1993) represent a well-known exception to the otherwise rigid definiteness restriction against

⁹ De Cesare (2007) claims that the pseudo-relative is a necessary condition for a PCS, i.e. it is obligatory. We saw, though, that PCS can alternatively involve an adjectival or a prepositional phrase; see (7) and (25) above. In this paper, however, I am mostly considering PCSs with a CP, which are those that are problematic with a view to the distinction between clefts and other *ci*-sentence types.

¹⁰ The example in (29) is taken from the online version of the newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (www.ilfattoquotidiano.it). Example (30) is from *La Stampa* corpus and is discussed in Karssenberget al (2017, 66).

definite pivots in English. See the example in (32) originally discussed in Abbott (1993, 42):

- (32) A: Is there anything to eat?
B: Well, there's the leftover chicken from last night

In Italian, contextualized existentials with a definite DP can be followed by a relative-clause CP, as shown in (33):

- (33) C' è la mela che ho tagliato.
there is the apple that have.1SG cut
'There's the apple that I cut.'
(Sornicola 2010, 127)

Similarly to the English example in (32), the Italian sentence in (33) can be an appropriate answer to the question *Che cosa posso mangiare?* 'What can I eat?'. In contextualized existentials (see Abbott 1992, 1993), the definiteness of the pivot is not incompatible with the general function of existentials:

An entity which is presupposed to exist (and normally morphosyntactically encoded as definite) is not necessarily presupposed to exist in a particular context, so the function of contextualized existentials is to assert or to draw attention to (the existence/presence of) an entity in relation to some particular context/background – often as a reminder when this relation has been forgotten or overlooked – or with respect to a specific purpose or goal.

(Bentley, Ciconte and Cruschina 2015, 47)

Apparent examples of the PCS construction would therefore be better interpreted as contextualized existentials that express the availability of an individual or an entity for a specific purpose or function. The following examples are from *La Stampa* corpus and are discussed in Karssen et al. (2017) (as examples (20), (25), (22), and (38) respectively):

- (34) *Molti chiedono anche l'istituzione di una figura che rappresenti il minore: l'avvocato dei bambini. «Non sono d'accordo – osserva l'onorevole Lucidi – perché c'è già il PM che può rivestire questo ruolo, magari si può rafforzare il suo potere d'intervento.»*
'Many people also ask for the institution of a figure who represents minors: a children's advocate. "I disagree". observes Mr. Lucidi, "because *there's already the prosecutor who can take on this role*, maybe his right to intervene can be strengthened.'"
- (35) *Lido Vieri, preparatore dei portieri del Toro, è anche uno studioso di questo ruolo speciale, diverso da tutti gli altri. Forse, il più delicato sotto il profilo psicologico. Se un attaccante, un centrocampista o un difensore sbagliano, c'è il portiere che può metterci una pezza. Se sbaglia lui, non c'è rimedio. E il portiere è uno degli elementi-cardine, si punti al primo posto o si lotti per la salvezza.*

‘Lido Vieri, Toro’s goalkeeping coach, is also an expert in this special role, different from all the others. Maybe even the most delicate one from the psychological point of view. If an attacker, a midfielder or a defender makes a mistake, *there’s the goalkeeper who can make up for it*. If he makes a mistake, there’s no remedy. And the goalkeeper is one of the pivotal elements, whether you’re aiming for the top spot or fighting for survival.’

It must be noted that the grammaticality of the equivalent English translations confirms that we are dealing with contextualized existentials. PCSs are in fact impossible in English. Recall, moreover, that in PCSs, *c’è* is semantically empty and as such cannot be negated or interrogated (cf. § 2). Along the same lines, presentational *c’è* cannot be modified, insofar as it does not instantiate any predicate. The use of negation (36a) or of lower adverbs such as *già* ‘already’ (34) or *sempre* ‘always’ (36b) is therefore only compatible with existentials – as well as with inverse locatives (see below) – but not with PCSs:

- (36) a. Non c’è solo la giunta che vacilla. *Anche tra i commercianti torinesi si è aperta una profonda spaccatura con posizioni contrapposte.*
 ‘There’s not only the council that’s trembling. Even among the shopkeepers in Turin a profound split has emerged with opposing positions.’
 b. *Niente è andato bene, non potevamo cambiare l’esito della partita: qualunque cosa facessi c’era sempre qualcuno che sbagliava.*
 ‘Nothing went right, we couldn’t change the outcome of the match: whatever I did, *there was always someone who made a mistake.*’

It is not only existentials that can feature a relative-clause CP; this is possible in locatives, too, as illustrated with the examples in (37) (from CORIS, *Corpus di Italiano Scritto* ‘Corpus of written Italian’; punctuation mine) and in (38):

- (37) *Sono lì, è domenica pomeriggio, entro in cucina e c’è Cecilia che sta guardando la televisione e mi dice: guarda, c’è Paolo Bonolis che intervista Bilancia, il famoso serial killer.*
 ‘I am there, it’s a Sunday, I go into the kitchen and *there is Cecilia who is watching the television* and tells me: look, *Paolo Bonolis is there, interviewing Bilancia*, the famous serial killer.’
 (38) *C’è il Signor Ponza che chiede di essere ricevuto.*
 there is the Mr Ponza who asks of be.INF received
 ‘Mr Ponza (here) asks to be received.’
 (Berruto 1986, 71, fn.2; Cruschina 2012a, 98)

It can be argued that the two *ci*-sentences in (37) are both locative (type II), in that the clitic *ci* refers back to a discourse-active location: *in cucina* ‘in the kitchen’ and *la televisione* ‘(on) the television’. In (38), by contrast, we find the typical interpretation of deictic locatives (type III) (i.e. here and now). Admittedly, however, these are difficult cases to examine and a certain degree of ambiguity remains. Some tests may be used to show that we are dealing with locative sentence types or, at least, that the locative interpretation is possible. First of all, focus fronting can be applied as a syntactic test for

the argument-focus status of the pivot DP: recall that in type-II *ci*-sentences (inverse locatives), the DP is narrowly focalized, while the locative predicate is either dislocated or omitted and picked up by the clitic proform *ci*. Since the DP corresponds to the narrow focus of the sentence, this could be fronted, at least in those Italian varieties that admit this operation:

- (39) a. *(Anche) Cecilia c' è, che sta guardando la televisione.*
 also Cecilia there is who stays watching the television
 b. *(Solo) il Signor Ponza c' è, che chiede di essere ricevuto.*
 only the Mr Ponza there is, who asks to be.INF received
- (40) **(Anche/Solo) la supertestimone c' è che accusa, ritratta ...*
 also only the star-witness there is who accuses, retracts, ...

Focus fronting is more freely available in southern Italy. In other varieties of Italian, the presence of a focalizing particle (e.g. the equivalent of *also* and *only*) may improve the grammaticality of the structure, especially with a surprise interpretation and intonation (see Cruschina 2012a, 2012b). The application of focus fronting to the examples in (37) and (38) gives rise to grammatically and pragmatically acceptable results, whereas the application of this test to a PCS, like that in (41) (from CORIS), yields ungrammaticality. In general, we may say that focus fronting forces an (inverse) locative interpretation which is incompatible with PCS.

- (41) *I sassi dal cavalcavia a Tortona sono Rashomon: c'è la supertestimone che accusa, ritratta, riconferma, ritratta le riconferme.*
 'The stones from the footbridge in Tortona are Rashomon: the star witness keeps accusing, retracting, reconfirming, retracting the reconfirmations.'

The narrow focus interpretation of the DP in the *ci*-sentence can also be tested against a context in which a contrast or correction is created with respect to an alternative referent. In such a context, the first *ci*-sentence in (37) would indeed prove grammatical either with or without focus fronting (42), confirming that we are dealing with a narrowly focused subject, which acts as the subject of the locative predication, and a relative clause. This leads us to the generalization in (43):¹¹

- (42) *Entro in cucina e c'è Cecilia [Cecilia c'è], non Paola come al solito, che sta guardando la televisione.*
 'I go into the kitchen and *there* is Cecilia, not Paola as usual, who is watching the television.'
- (43) (Inverse) locatives with a CP put the subject of predication (i.e. the DP) in focus, which can be followed by a restrictive or appositive relative clause.

We can also syntactically test for the status of the CP. As observed in the literature (see e.g., Casalicchio 2013), pseudo-relatives can only be interpreted as referring to the subject: there are no object pseudo-relatives. This restriction does not hold for proper

¹¹ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this additional test to me.

relative clauses.¹² Sentence (33), repeated here as (44), cannot thus be an instance of the PCS construction but must be analysed as a (contextualized) existential because it is followed by an object relative clause. If we try to build a PCS with an object relative clause, as in (45), we obtain an ungrammatical and infelicitous outcome:

(44) *C' è la mela che ho tagliato.*
 there is the apple that have.1SG cut
 'There's the apple that I cut.'

(45) ??*C' è il gatto che ho visto/guarito.*
 there is the cat that have.1SG seen/cured

Example (45) would only be grammatical if a locative interpretation was favoured by making a location (e.g. in the garden) salient in the context. However, as we know, locatives are followed by genuine relatives and not by pseudo-relatives.

4. The functions of the PCS construction

As already discussed, in PCSs the element *ci* makes no semantic contribution to the overall meaning of the construction, which is simply used to assert or present an event or a situation. To distinguish it from canonical predications, however, the construction has been attributed a special pragmatic value (cf. § 2). PCSs are characterized by an unequivocal sentence-focus structure, which is typical of presentational sentences and which contrasts with the predicate-focus structure of the unmarked subject-predicate (or topic-comment) sentence type with a canonical SVO (see Lambrecht 1994). This characteristic constitutes the major pragmatic function of the PCS construction, which alone may be able to justify and motivate its emergence and functional specialization out of the existential construction.

4.1. The focusing function of PCS: a comparison with clefts

In this section, I compare PCSs with clefts proper, especially in relation to their recognized focus function. The focusing function of the cleft construction has been widely acknowledged since the first analyses of clefts (see Jespersen 1937; also see Cruschina 2015c for discussion).¹³ As pointed out by Lambrecht, clefts are argument-focus sentences, which put an argument into focus:

Cleft constructions are focus-marking devices used to prevent unintended predicate-focus construal of a proposition. Clefts serve to mark as focal an argument that might otherwise be construed as nonfocal, or as nonfocal a predicate that might otherwise be construed as focal, or both. (Lambrecht 2001, 489)

¹² The same restriction does not hold for cleft sentences either, showing a further important difference between PCSs and clefts.

¹³ Recent analyses have shown, however, that clefts may be used with different functions and information structures (see, e.g., Dufter 2009; Roggia 2009; Frascarelli and Ramaglia 2013, 2014; De Cesare 2017, among others).

It is generally claimed that the clefted constituent conveys a particular type of focus, namely, exhaustive focus (see Bolinger 1972; Hedberg 1990, 2000; É. Kiss 1999; Lambrecht 2001, among others). The specific meaning associated with the clefted focus in (46a) would then correspond to that paraphrased in (46b). Clefts, moreover, can also perform a contrastive function, as shown in (47):

- (46) a. It was **John** that invited Mary.
 b. “Of a set of relevant persons it is true of John and no one else that he invited Mary”. (É. Kiss 1999, 219)
- (47) *È un ciliegio che è nel giardino, non un melo.*
 is a cherry-tree that is in-the garden not an apple-tree
 ‘It is a cherry tree that is in the garden, not an apple tree
 (Sornicola 2010, 121)

The type of focalization involved in clefts, be it exhaustive or contrastive, is semantic in nature: narrow focus generates a set of alternatives which are relevant for the semantic interpretation of the overall linguistic expression (see Rooth 1992; Krifka 2007). Semantic focus is associated with a set of properties on the other levels of the grammar, primarily with the main prominence within the utterance on the prosodic level and the speaker’s intention to direct the attention of the interlocutors to the focus constituent on the pragmatic one. Semantic focus, however, should be kept distinct from pragmatic focus, which introduces a new referent into the discourse (see Lambrecht 1994). Following Gundel and Fretheim (2004), this distinction can be defined along two different dimensions (see also Cruschina 2012b): (i) relational, with respect to the rest of the sentence, and (ii) referential, that is, related to the discourse and to the speakers’ common background and knowledge. The two notions may overlap but not necessarily: it is perfectly possible for a referentially given (i.e. topical) referent to be semantic focus, generating a set of alternatives with a constant background, as in (48) and (49):

- (48) a. Where did you go last night, to the movies or to the restaurant?
 b. We went to the *restaurant*.
- (49) *John, Peter, and Paul did all well in the exams, but it’s Peter that got the highest marks.*

What is new in these examples is not the referent of the focus constituent, which is in fact discourse-active at the time of the utterance since it has just been mentioned, but rather the relationship between the focus expression and the rest of the proposition (Lambrecht 1994, 211). In the example in (49), the background (i.e. *x* got the highest mark) in fact corresponds to the (referentially) new part of the sentence, while Peter was mentioned in the previous sentence. Relationally, however, it is the constituent *Peter* that is singled out with respect to other contextually relevant alternatives at the propositional level (*John got the highest mark, Peter got the highest mark, Paul got the highest mark*). The background, thus, need not be given, but simply represents the part of the assertion that stays constant within the set of alternative propositions (see also Bianchi, Bocci and Cruschina 2015, 2016). Referential and pragmatic focus is therefore not a real instance of narrow focus, but merely consists in the introduction of a new referent into the discourse.

Unlike clefts, the focus function of PCSs is pragmatic in nature and must be exclusively understood in the referential sense. In the absence of a narrow focus, no set of alternatives is generated at the semantic level and the typical interpretive effects associated with semantic focus are also missing (e.g. contrast, exhaustivity, etc.).

PCSs are sentence-focus structures (Cruschina 2012a, 2015b), where “an NP coding a discourse-new entity functions simultaneously as the complement of a presentational verb and as the subject of a regular predication” (Lambrecht 2000, 655; see also De Cesare 2007; Marzo and Crocco 2015). This implies that the DP referent cannot be an (aboutness) topic, even in the cases in which it can be discourse given, and that the pseudo-relative CP does not convey background information presupposed by the speakers. Most importantly, the DP of a PCS cannot be an argument focus: if we try to impose narrow focus on a PCS (e.g. prosodically, by creating a contrast), ungrammatical or pragmatically odd results are produced, as shown in the examples (50)–(52):

- (50) ^(?) *C' è il gatto che ha fame, non il cane.*
 there is the cat that has hunger not the dog
 ‘**The cat** is hungry, not the dog.’
- (51) ^(?) *C' è Lena che compie gli anni lo stesso giorno, non Maria.*
 there is Lena that finishes the years the same day not Mary
 ‘**Lena** has her birthday on the same day, not Mary.’
- (52) ^(?) *C' è mia madre che sta male, non mio padre.*
 there is my mother who stays ill not my father
 ‘**My mother** is ill, not my father.’

Focus on the argument forces a locative interpretation, which in turn depends on the presence of a contextual salient location (cf. § 3.2). If the locative interpretation is pragmatically possible, this will rescue the grammaticality of the sentence.

In other words, being sentence-focus structures, PCSs are incompatible with those interpretations of the DP that are characteristic of different focus structures: the DP cannot be the aboutness topic of the sentence, which would correspond to a predicate-focus structure, and nor can it be a narrow focus, which would instantiate an argument-focus structure. Apart from these restrictions, from a pragmatic standpoint, different information-structure articulations, related to the distinction between new and old information, and even articulations that are unrelated to information structure are possible in PCSs, as shown in Karssenberget al. (2017).

I have then shown that PCSs are different from clefts not only with respect to their morphosyntactic make-up (cf. § 1.2), but also with regard to their primary function: narrow focalization in the case of clefts, and the introduction of a sentence-focus structure asserting the existence of an event or situation in the case of PCS. We then arrive at the definition in (53):

- (53) Presentationals with a CP assert the existence of an event or situation structurally instantiated by a DP + CP construction (i.e. the subject and the predicate of a Small Clause, respectively).

PCSs constitute a presentational construction that allow speakers to introduce a new proposition into the discourse. Semantically, this proposition is constituted by a subject of the predication and a predicate, which are to be identified with the DP and the CP of the construction, respectively. This definition concerns PCSs with a CP, which are the most ambiguous cases given their similarities with existentials and locatives with a CP. As previously stated, however, the predicate can also be an adjectival or prepositional phrase (cf. § 12, § 2.3).

4.2. Pragmatic functions and uses of PCSs

Now that we have established the main function of PCSs, let us delve into the contexts in which PCSs are typically employed. In general, PCSs have a discourse-internal function, in that they introduce a new proposition into the context as relevant and pertinent to the discourse (see, among others, Berruto 1986 and Berretta 1995 for Italian, and Lambrecht 1988, 1994 for French). This function is indeed characteristic of the narrative and spoken language (Berruto 1986; Marzo and Crocco 2015). In this section, I present some more specific contexts of use and the range of interpretations that PCSs may be used to express. It should be noted that the following is by no means an exhaustive list of usages, but instead reflects some observations and generalizations about the common functions of PCSs by looking at corpus data and other real-life examples:

A) *Premise or reminder*: a certain piece of knowledge (an event or a situation) is asserted as a premise about the context or as a kind of reminder before the main assertion is uttered (54). In this context, PCSs seem to be associated with a meaning such as ‘as you know’, ‘as we both know’.

- (54) a. *C’ è il gatto che ha fame, portagli da mangiare.*
 there is the cat that has hunger bring.IMP.2SG-it to eat.INF
 ‘The cat is hungry, bring it food.’
 b. *C’ è Maria che ci aspetta, sbrigati!*
 there is Mary that us waits hurry-up.IMP.2SG
 ‘Mary is waiting for us, hurry up!’

B) *Relevant background information*: a certain piece of knowledge (an event or a situation) which is part of the background information is pointed out as relevant to a specific point of the conversation, as in (55) and (56). In this context, the construction can be paraphrased with expressions such as ‘by the way’, ‘concerning this’, ‘did you know?’:

- (55) [CONTEXT: John and Mary are talking about Silvio’s birthday and, incidentally, Mary says:]
C’ è Lena che compie gli anni lo stesso giorno.
 there is Lena that finishes the years the same day
 ‘Lena has her birthday on the same day.’
 (56) [CONTEXT: Lucy wants to become an Opera singer. John and Mary are talking about how difficult it is and John utters:]
C’ è mia cugina che canta al Teatro dell’ Opera di Vienna.

there is my cousin that sings at-the Theatre of-the Opera of Vienna
'My cousin sings at the Vienna Opera House.'

It is worth observing that in the contexts (A) and (B), the event or situation introduced by presentational *ci* does not correspond to the main assertion. Presentational *ci* introduces 'short-term' discourse topics, almost incidentally, and opens up a kind of second level of description or narration within the discourse, secondary with respect to the main point of the discussion (see Berrutto 1986, 70).

C) *Explanation or justification*: PCSs can be simply used to provide an explanation or a justification. Within this function, and unlike in the previous ones, the DP can remain the topic of the discourse and the PCS may correspond to the main point of the discussion. A possible means of expressing this pragmatic value in English could thus be 'it's because':¹⁴

- (57) A: 'Why do you look so sad?'
B: *C' è mia madre che sta male.*
there is my mother who is ill
'My mother is ill.'
- (58) A: 'Why is everybody so quiet today?'
B. *C' è il direttore che è arrabbiato. Meglio non scherzare.*
there is the director that is angry better not joke.INF
'The director is angry. We'd better not mess around.'

As mentioned, these three discourse functions do not exhaust the usage possibilities of PCS. In many cases, like in the following two examples from CORIS (*Corpus di Italiano Scritto* 'Corpus of written Italian'), any pragmatic value other than the general presentational function is rather difficult to capture (the punctuation is mine):

- (59) *La chiamano in tanti modi : La Divina, la Tragica, la Signora e anche la Pososa:*
c'è Ferdinando Martini che la battezza così.
'They call it different things: the Divine, the Tragic, the Lady and also the 'Pososa': Ferdinando Martini calls it that.'
- (60) *I sassi dal cavalcavia a Tortona sono Rashomon:* c'è la supertestimone che accusa, ritratta, riconferma, ritratta le riconferme.
'The stones from the footbridge in Tortona are Rashomon: the star witness keeps accusing, retracting, reconfirming, retracting the reconfirmations.'

We can thus conclude that PCSs are a device that allows speakers to focus entire clauses or sentences and to communicate a varied range of interpretations.

¹⁴ In this sense, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer, PCSs resemble inferentials (see Delahunty 1995; 2001, Delahunty and Gatzkiewicz 2000, and references therein).

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have shown that PCSs share several properties with both clefts and existentials, making it difficult to define the exact boundaries between these constructions. PCSs must be kept distinct from clefts, not only morphosyntactically but also with regard to the focus structure and the focalizing function. I have also argued that PCSs are different from other *ci*-sentence types, especially with respect to the role and function of *ci*, the definiteness of the DP, and the type of CP. PCSs also stand out for their distinct presentational function.

Based on this comparison, we can put together the properties that characterize the PCS construction and that may help us to establish boundaries between the different *ci*-sentence types and, more specifically, to distinguish PCS from existentials (type I) and from locatives (types II and III). These properties are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: Setting the boundaries: PCS vis-à-vis existentials and locatives

	EXISTENTIAL	LOCATIVE	PRESENTATIONAL
<i>ci</i>	non-referential (implicit loc)	referential	semantically empty
DP	Indefinite	definite/specific	definite/specific
CP	Relative	relative	pseudo-relative
function	to assert the existence of a new entity (DP)	focus on the subject of a locative predication	to assert the existence of a new event or situation

On the one hand, PCSs may be regarded as non-prototypical existentials that preserve the morphosyntactic components and general function of existentials, but rather than asserting the existence of an entity, they assert the existence of an event or of a situation. On the other, PCSs may be viewed as non-prototypical clefts that include the pseudo-relative CP typical of clefts, but that operate a different focus function, that is, the presentation of an event or situation as all new within a sentence-focus structure, which is in turn incompatible with a narrow focus and with an aboutness topic. It is however the comparison with existentials and inverse locatives (cf. Table 3) that helps us understand the structural composition and the development of this construction.

As mentioned in the introduction, the superficial and functional overlapping with other constructions makes it difficult, if not impossible, to conduct quantitative analyses of the PCS construction. The morphosyntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties that define and distinguish PCSs should therefore be used as guiding criteria for qualitative analyses of this construction. Crosslinguistic comparative and contrastive analyses should also be welcomed in the attempt to advance the study of PCSs. We saw the complex case of contextualized existentials, for instance, which are more difficult to tell apart from PCSs. While contextualized existentials are possible in English – and were in fact first described for English as exceptions to the definiteness restriction –, PCSs are not really

available in this language and the only way to translate an Italian PCS into English is by means of a canonical, semantically-equivalent predication with a preverbal subject. English presentational-eventive *there*-clefts (Collins 1992; Lambrecht 2001) and specificational *there*-clefts (Davidse 2014; Davidse and Kimps 2016) may cover similar functions, but are not the exact equivalent of Italian PCSs (e.g. with respect to the definiteness of the pivot). On the one hand, the presence of equivalent constructions in other languages shows that the development of PCSs out of existentials is not uniquely found in Italian (see Lambrecht 1988, 1994, 2002 for French; Leonetti 2008 and Villalba 2013 for Catalan; Marten 2013 for Swahili). On the other, the absence of an equivalent construction in other languages, even as an extension of the existential source construction, may speak in favour of its autonomous status with respect to existentials.

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